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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 004842

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [SA](#)

SUBJECT: CHALABI ALLY: THERE IS NO RESISTANCE, ONLY
TERRORISM

Classified By: ACTING POLITICAL COUNSELOR MICHAEL J. ADLER, FOR REASONS
1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) In a December 3 meeting with Poloffs, INC candidate Mariam al-Rais argued in favor of her party's platform and party leader Ahmed Chalabi's qualifications to lead the next government. Al-Rais faulted Jordan, Syria and Saudi Arabia for contributing to Iraq's instability. In a clear allusion to the Arab League Cairo Prepcon statement she said that there is no "resistance" in Iraq, only terrorism. END SUMMARY

12. (U) Poloffs met December 3 with TNA member Mariam al-Rais, who is currently running on Ahmed Chalabi's Iraqi National Congress (INC) list in the upcoming election. Al-Rais began her presentation with a general assertion of support for de-Ba'athification and anti-corruption efforts. With that in mind, she asked rhetorically why the TNA had not lifted the immunity of Alawi-ally and former Minister of Defense Hazim al-Shalan (NOTE: Members of the TNA raised this issue during the previous week's session, but no action was taken.) Al-Rais then presented portions of the INC's campaign platform: combating poverty in Iraq through the direct allocation of a percentage of oil revenues to Iraqi citizens; distributing state land for housing to Iraqi citizens; and improving the education system, particularly universities.

13. (C) The INC List has candidates in all 15 governorates outside of Kurdistan. Al-Rais said the list has some national figures as well as provincial notables. She also said that Chalabi maintains close ties to politicians on other lists, including Sadrists and Shaykh Abdel Kareem al-Mohamedawi (Abu Hatem). On the subject of campaign intimidation, she did not point to any campaign problems or irregularities regarding the INC. When PolOff raised recent media reports of campaign intimidation with other parties, she acknowledged that she had heard that others had presented complaints to the IECI, and wondered why the IECI had not done anything in response. (NOTE: Embassy has pressed the IECI to issue a statement condemning campaign intimidation; on December 4, International Commissioner Jenness told Poloffs the Commission has plans to do so.)

14. (C) While al-Rais refused to speculate on how the INC will do in the elections, she did say there are only four personalities who could be the next Prime Minister: former PM Allawi, current PM Jafari, VP Abd' al-Mehdi, and DPM Chalabi. She argued forcefully that of the group, Ahmed Chalabi would be the most appropriate candidate.

15. (C) Al-Rais said "there is no resistance in Iraq, just terrorism" -- a clear reference to the Arab League Cairo Prepcon's final statement. She pointed to Iraq's Arab neighbors as sources of the country's instability -- in particular to Jordan and Syria (i.e., for giving sanctuary to terrorists and Ba'athists) as well as Saudi Arabia (as the source of Wahabism).

COMMENT

16. (C) Al-Rais was emphatic that Ahmed Chalabi is the right man to lead Iraq. She argued that twenty years of war had psychologically damaged generations of Iraqis, and that only those who had been in exile -- like Chalabi -- are appropriate leaders at this juncture. Her discussion of threats from neighboring countries was notable for the absence of a reference to Iran. As for Al-Rais, herself, unless the INC list does unexpectedly well in the elections, it is unlikely that she will be elected to the Council of Representatives. She is the ninth candidate on the INC's Baghdad list.
SATTERFIELD